



**Town of Lexington**  
**Land Use, Health and Development Department**  
**Office of Public Health**  
**1625 Massachusetts Avenue**  
**Lexington, MA 02420**  
(781)-698-4533  
Fax (781)-861-2780

Casey Mellin, CHO, REHS/RS  
*Asst. Health Director*

David Neylon, RN, MPH, REHS/RS  
*Public Health Nurse*

Alicia McCartin, REHS/RS  
*Health Agent*

**Board of Health**

Wendy Heiger-Bernays, PhD, Chair  
Burt M. Perlmutter, M.D.  
David S. Geller, M.D.  
John J. Flynn, J.D.  
Susan Wolf-Fordham, J.D., M.P.A.

August 10, 2021

The following information motivates the Lexington Board of Health to adopt an indoor mask order:

**Delta Variant of SARS-CoV-2 (virus that causes COVID-19)<sup>1</sup>**

1. In Massachusetts and in the US, the Delta variant is the dominant form of the virus;
2. The Delta variant is highly contagious, with estimates between 2-6 times as contagious as previous variants;
3. The vaccines for COVID-19 are effective (~70-90%) at reducing the severity of the disease and significantly preventing death from COVID-19<sup>2,3</sup>; however;
4. People fully-vaccinated for COVID-19 are becoming infected with the Delta variant and vaccinated people transmit the virus to other people<sup>4, 5</sup>;

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/delta-variant.html>

<sup>2</sup> Bernal JL, Andrews N, Gower C, et al. Effectiveness of Covid-19 Vaccines against the B.1.617.2 (Delta) Variant. N Engl J Med. 2021 Jul 21;doi:10.1056/NEJMoa2108891external icon

<sup>3</sup> Stowe J, Andrews N, Gower C, et al. Effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines against hospital admission with the Delta (B.1.617.2) variant. 2021. [https://khub.net/web/phe-national/public-library/-/document\\_library/v2WsRK3ZIEig/view\\_file/479607329](https://khub.net/web/phe-national/public-library/-/document_library/v2WsRK3ZIEig/view_file/479607329)

<sup>4</sup> Musser JM, Christensen PA, Olsen RJ. et al. Delta Variants of SARS-CoV-2 Cause Significantly Increased Vaccine Breakthrough COVID-19 Cases in Houston, Texas. medRxiv. 2021 Jul 22; <https://org/10.1101/2021.07.07.21260122>.

<sup>5</sup> Brown CM, Vostok J, Johnson H, et al. Outbreak of SARS-CoV-2 Infections, Including COVID-19 Vaccine Breakthrough Infections, Associated with Large Public Gatherings — Barnstable County, Massachusetts, July 2021. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep. ePub: 30 July 2021; <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7031e2.htm>

5. Hospitalization rates are increasing, including rates in children under 12 who cannot be vaccinated;
6. In Lexington, we have seen a significant increase in the number of cases since mid-July; In June and early July we had “0” cases each week- this has increased to 27 cases in the past 14 days – with a rate of 5.7/100,000 people as reported on August 8;
7. CDC has categorized the level of community transmission for each county and state – this is based on the number of cases in the last 7 days per 100,000 population and the number of tests in the last 7 days that have a positive result; categories include low, moderate, substantial, and high;

Given what we know about the Delta variant, vaccine effectiveness, and increasing case numbers, hospitalizations and deaths, it is imperative that layered prevention strategies be implemented. These include vaccination, increasing ventilation indoors, and wearing masks – all needed to reduce the transmission of the Delta variant.

8. On July 27, 2021, CDC released [updated guidance](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html) on the need for urgently increasing COVID-19 vaccination coverage and a recommendation for everyone in areas of [substantial or high transmission](https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view) to wear a mask in public indoor places, even if they are fully vaccinated<sup>6</sup>;
9. Middlesex County, in which Lexington is located, is now an area of “substantial” transmission<sup>7</sup>;
10. Masks, when worn properly - covering the mouth and the nose, are estimated to decrease the rates of transmission by up to 50-70%<sup>8</sup>.

Thus, given the evidence of increased risk of transmission even among vaccinated individuals, and the substantial benefit of mask wearing in reducing transmission rates within enclosed areas where airborne transmission can be highest, and air is shared, the Lexington BOH has identified the need to issue an order for mandatory mask wearing indoors in publicly accessible spaces within Lexington, MA.

---

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html>

<sup>7</sup> <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>

<sup>8</sup> Brooks JT, Butler JC. Effectiveness of Mask Wearing to Control Community Spread of SARS-CoV-2. *JAMA*. 2021;325(10):998–999. doi:10.1001/jama.2021.1505